CHANGES TO SUCK NAVIGATION RULES

By Liam Timmins

Waterways Ireland are proposing significant changes to the current Shannon Navigation and Canal Bye Laws, some affecting operations of local boat owners and cruiser traffic of the River Suck.

The Irish navigation authority, responsible for the management, maintenance, development, and restoration of inland navigable waterways, has proposed revisions to their bye-laws including an introduction of a €200 Annual Registration Fee for vessels, mandatory insurance for all vessels, abolishment of their Winter Mooring facilities, reducing the Five Day Mooring Rule to three days in key locations, and introducing a Fixed Penalty Notice of €150.

The primary proposal affecting boat lovers of town and the area would be the abolishment of Winter Mooring where boat owners, who can currently leave their vessels in the harbour during the off-season between November and April for a fixed charge, would no longer have the service available. This will result in the local marina being deserted during the Winter and Spring seasons and force local boat owners into the financial strain of taking up private mooring facilities. Thankfully the Marina remains at the current Five Day Mooring Status for the main-season within town.

Several Public Consultations have taken place nationwide, with locals giving their views at a recent meeting in Athlone. Many attendees agreed paying the €200 Annual Registration Fee for use of the navigation was a reasonable ask, although some remained concerned regarding proposals which could personally impact their operations.

The deadline for the consultation is 16:00 on October 2, 2023. River Suck IAWAI Club Chairman Graham Bartlett encouraged submissions reminding: "I would very strongly advise that anyone that enjoys the use of our local waterways in any capacity to visit the Waterways Ireland website and familiarize themselves fully with all the proposed changes".

Those with thoughts can email a submission to corporate@waterwaysireland.org (including 'Byelaw consultation' in the subject line) or you could post it out to Waterways Ireland Inspectorate, The Docks, Athlone. Additionally an online Feedback Form is available at waterwaysireland.org/Pages/Public-Consultation-on-Draft-Byelaws.aspx.

In other activity, the River Suck played host to the annual gathering of the Freeman Cruisers Ireland. Owners of Freeman vessels berthed in the Marina and participated in a competition judging the appearance of their crafts. The first place winner of the best decorated boat were Nuala and Cain on their 'Funky Duck', along with Runner-Ups Sinead and Brendan on 'Take a Chance' and Conor on his 'Camino'.

Club Chair Graham Bartlett expressed thanks to Ryan's Bar for their support, and confirmed that the event will take place again next year.

The River Suck is available for hosting any potential events, ideal for its easy access to the town's shopping and hotels. The first point of contact for organising your occasion would be through Waterways Ireland via their Online Services Portal on their website. The IWAI River Suck Branch can be of assistance in any way via email at iwairiversuck@gmail.com.

Members of the Freemans Cruisers at their 2023 annual gathering.